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ABSTRACT

A study of the current expressed reading interests of children in the first two years of school conducted in ten countries--Austria, Canada, England, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Panama, Sweden, and the United States--is reported in this paper. Over 2,000 children drew pictures about what they would best like to read or have read to them. They were then interviewed for additional information in an attempt to ascertain the derivation of their interests. Specific topics drawn and/or stated by the children are listed along with the categories into which topics were placed. Three of the conclusions appearing to grow out of the study are: although some significant differences emerged from country to country, there were more similarities in interests across the ten countries than differences; fairy tales and fantasies were the most preferred expressed reading interests of first- and second-year children in the ten countries; and reading interests of second-year children demonstrated more preferences for nonfictional topics than the interests of first-year children. (Author/WR)

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EXPRESSED READING INTERESTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY

A study of the current expressed reading of children in the first two years of school was conducted in 10 countries: Austria, Canada, England, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Panama, Sweden, and the United States. Over 2,000 children drew pictures about what they would best like to read or have read to them. They were then interviewed for additional information and in an attempt to ascertain the derivation of their interests. Specific topics drawn and/or stated by the children are listed along with the categories into which topics were placed.

Bearing in mind that the findings and generalizations growing from the findings are extremely limited by the delimitations of the study, three of the conclusions appearing to grow out of the study are:

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(1) Although some significant differences emerged from country to country, there were more similarities in interests across the ten countries than differences. (2) Fairy tales and fantasies were the most preferred expressed reading interests of first and second year children in the ten countries. (3) Reading interests of second-year children demonstrated more preferences for nonfictional topics than the interests of first-year children.

EXPRESSED READING INTERESTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY*

Many teachers appear to feel that students understand better when they are interested in what they are reading. As a result of this concern a number of investigators have naturally turned their attention

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*Thanks must be extended to so many people for helping with this research project. Space only permits a general but very sincere thank you to all the teachers, principals, and examiners in each country who worked so carefully to preserve the integrity of the study. Specifically we thank the "contact" people who helped us plan and execute the research in each country: AUSTRIA, Dr. Richard Bamberger; CANADA, Dr. Jean E. Robertson; ENGLAND, Dr. Vera Southgate Booth, Dr. Joyce Morris, Mr. Ronald Johnson, Ms. Elizabeth T. Jay; ISRAEL, Dr. Eliahu Erell; ITALY, Dr. Tiziano Donadi; JAPAN, Dr. Akira Okada; the NETHERLANDS, Mr. Karel van Wetering; PANAMA, Ms. Margaret Leigh, Ms. Alva Piper; SWEDEN, Dr. Evé Malmquist, Ms. Barbro Billing; UNITED STATES, Mr. Millard Black, Dr. Carolyn Burke, Dr. Ann Hughes, Ms. Zenobia Jones, Dr. Morris Marmon. Special thanks also to Dr. Nancy Dworkin for data analysis and Ms. Doris Baxter for assistance in arranging for an early pilot study.

to pursuing the interest factor in reading. More than 300 investigations of reading preferences were published prior to the 1960s, largely in the United States. Although the surge of studies has diminished to some extent, researchers still continue their pursuit of the interest factor. Only a limited amount of research has been focused upon the preferences of the beginning reader in the first and second years of school. To the investigators' knowledge, after a careful search of the literature, no investigators have previously explored the expressed reading interests of young children across a number of countries.

The purpose of the study was to survey and compare the expressed reading interests of children in the first and second years of formal schooling (not including kindergarten) in an attempt to determine similarities and differences among countries, within each of the school years, and from first to second year. The total sample consisted of 2,113 children; three children would not or could not respond leaving a final total of 2,110. Of these 2,110 children, 106 were from Austria, 105 from Canada, 196 from England, 103 from Israel, 88 from Italy, 99 from Japan, 80 from the Netherlands, 129 from Panama, 126 from Sweden, and 1,078 from three geographic areas of the United States. The overall sample included 1,045 girls and 1,065 boys.

The study was originally designed by Dr. Dorothy Kirsch as an investigation of the expressed reading interests of children in grades one and two in three cities and suburban areas of the United States. This early part of the investigation was completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Hofstra University. Dr. Kirsch's study was then expanded and the results of her investigation was included in the investigation of

children in 10 countries. This phase of the investigation was completed under the direction of Professor H. Alan Robinson who wrote to friends in nine countries and requested their assistance in collecting data. He then travelled to six of these countries to observe, answer questions, and assure parallelism. In most cases, classroom teachers conducted the interviews with the children. Professor Robinson spent about two or three days in each country on his trip around the world. All data in the ten countries was collected in 1972.

PLAN OF THE STUDY

Information on expressed reading interests was collected from a total of 2,110 children by interviews on a one-to-one basis. The children's own drawings were used to elicit their expressed interests. They were asked to draw a picture about what they would best like to read or have read to them. Each child, interviewed alone, would then draw a picture. The investigator confirmed the child's reading interest by means of a structured interview. When possible, the derivation of the interest was also elicited.

After the data had been collected, comparisons were made according to country, sex, intelligence, reading level, chronological age, and year in school.

1. The interests were expressed by the children at that point in time. The feelings of the child about the reading interests were not probed psychologically or sociologically, nor were the interests then related to child development patterns.

2. The sample was limited to children in selected schools in the

United States on the basis of urban and inner city locations in the metropolitan areas of New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles. The schools in the other nine countries were selected on the basis of convenience and cooperation. Since Professor Robinson wrote to people he knew in various countries for their assistance in gathering the information, the samples were not randomized.

3. The technique used in collecting data--children's drawings in combination with an interview--was essentially subjective, even though the interview was structured. This interview was more detailed in the United States and less so in the other nine countries.

4. The designation of reading level was judgmental on the part of the teachers.

5. The designation of intelligence level as low, average, or high was obtained from the Goodenough Draw-A-Man Test.

6. There were differences in age although the children were in the same grade. In Sweden, the children were generally one year older than in other countries because in Sweden the children start school one year later. In England the children were one year younger because they begin school roughly one year earlier. This variation has been taken into consideration in describing the results.

7. In the study of Alberta, Canada; Venice, Italy; and in the Canal Zone, the data were collected by persons other than those immediately involved in the research project. The interpretations and carrying out of instructions was entrusted to persons who were residing and working in those areas at that time. And in Japan, interviews were conducted by college students majoring in education. However, these

students were well trained and followed the directions explicitly.

FINDINGS

In this section of the paper three main elements of the study are explored: (1) the topics children in the world sample expressed an interest in reading about; (2) the classification of the topics into predetermined categories, which were then compared statistically to ascertain similarities and differences; and (3) an attempt to ascertain the derivation of the child's reading interest—whether it was fostered by books, television, or personal experiences. The data reveals striking similarities from country to country, along with unique differences.

The Topics

Each child's reading interest—the subject drawn and talked about, was termed the topic. The topics were then allocated to seven pre-arranged categories: information-scientific; information-historic; information-1970s; realistic fiction; imaginative fiction; humor; and poetry. Generally, the child's drawing revealed the reading topic of interest; through the interview, the specific manner in which the topic was viewed. For example, if a child drew a dog, he might reveal, upon questioning, that he liked stories about real animals, which would be classified, in the categories, as realistic fiction. However, if he disclosed upon questioning that he wanted information on how to raise dogs, it would then be allocated to the category "information-scientific." Or, perhaps, he stated that he liked stories about make-believe dogs, in which case his interest would be classified as "imaginative fiction."

The 1,062 children in the first year of school who participated in the study made 1,095 choices, which are classified as 24 appropriate

topics. The number of choices exceeded the number of children by 33; some children made more than one choice. Fictional topics numbered 851, or 78 percent of the choices; non-fiction topics numbered 244, or 22 percent of the total. The first 10 topics reflected more than 89 percent of the reading interests of children in the first year of school.

Topic choices for children in the first year of school are shown in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 here - see page 7a]

Titles mentioned as favorite fairy tales or fantasies by 297 (27.12%) of the children in the first year of school across the 10 countries included both classic fairy tales and modern fantasies. Named by some subjects in 50 percent or more of the countries surveyed were the time-honored favorites: Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, The Three Bears, and Jack and the Beanstalk. Frequently mentioned was the Swedish modern-day fantasy Pippi Longstocking. Children also named as favorites fairy tales, fantasies, tales which were apparently indigenous to their country. Thus, children in the Netherlands spoke of a story about Santa Claus arriving in the Netherlands on a steamer; Austrian children appeared to favor Hansel and Gretel; and Japanese subjects named A Small House.

Requests by 173 children (15.80%) for "stories about children" appeared to mirror the everyday pursuits of the subjects, for the most part. Thus, there were requests for stories about children playing, children at school, children getting lost, and children going on trips.

TABLE 1

TOPICS CHOSEN BY CHILDREN IN THE FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOL

TOPIC	TOTAL	PERCENT	RANK
Fairy tales and fantasies	297	27.12	1
Stories about children	173	15.80	2
Stories about real animals	146	13.33	3
Information about animals	110	10.04	4
Stories about people	80	7.31	5
Monster stories - superhuman personalities	53	4.84	6
Real-life adventure stories	40	3.65	7
Funny stories	31	2.83	8
How to make and/or operate mechanical vehicles, etc.	29	2.65	9
Information on vocations	23	2.10	10
TV cartoons	17	1.55	11
How things grow	15	1.37	12
Mystery and ghost stories	13	1.19	13
Prehistoric life	12	1.10	14
Historic events and famous people	11	1.00	15
Information on sports	10	.91	16
Chemical and biological information	8	.73	17
"How to..." information, other than mechanical	6	.55	18
Famous contemporary people	6	.55	18
Current events	5	.46	19
Religious themes	4	.37	20
Information on space	4	.37	20
Ecology	1	.09	21
Science fiction	1	.09	21

Among the titles specifically mentioned were Tom Sawyer, Heidi, and from Israeli children, Hanna's Shabat Dress.

One hundred and forty-six (13.33%) of the first year children apparently desired to read about all kinds of animals--pets, circus animals, and wild animals. Books in the Lassie series were frequently mentioned; others included Fury and Black Beauty. Information was requested about a tremendously varied group of living creatures: dogs, horses, and cats were the favorites, but there was also interest in birds, lions, pigs, guinea pigs, elephants, tigers, whales, reindeer, ants, and grasshoppers.

Interest in real-life adventure stories included requests by 40 (3.65%) children for stories about cowboys and cowgirls, soldiers, sailors, knights of old, boys and girls in different lands, and a desire to see other places, through books, arriving there by car and plane. Among the titles were The Desert Fox and The Sardinian Drummer Boy.

Stories about people seemed to reflect the every-day life of 80 (7.31%) of the subjects; requests frequently were made for stories about family members, particularly siblings.

Among the characters mentioned in "monster stories" were witches, devils, and robots. Dracula and Zorro were among the specific titles; Japanese children mentioned a number of monster stories which were apparently unique to their country. Stories which appealed to children because of humor included such titles as Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, Rolling Rice Ball, and A Man with a Yellow Hat. "How to..." information included interest in how to make cars, operate submarines and trains, make marionettes and dolls, collect butterflies, and learn to bake. Information about sports included interests in gymnastics and football; information on vocations included requests for reading material on how to be an astronaut, a policeman, a doctor, and a teacher. Religious themes mentioned

characters from both the Old and New Testaments. And choices listed under "TV cartoons" included Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Tom and Jerry, Top Cat, Bugs Bunny, and Woody Woodpecker.

Similarities of choices of children throughout the sample, along with some striking differences, are shown in Table 2, which lists the first three choices of the children in the first year of school of each country in the survey.

Fairy tales and fantasies, which was the first choice of the sample, received the greatest degree of interest in eight of the 10 countries, with Japan and Canada giving it the second highest frequency. Stories about children, the second choice of the sample, received the second highest frequency of interest from four countries, the third highest from two. "Stories about real animals," the third choice of the sample, was chosen first by Canada, second by Panama, and third by Israel, while "information about animals," the fourth choice of the sample as a whole, was the second choice of Italy and Sweden and the third choice of the United States. "Stories about people," sixth choice of the sample, was Japan's first choice and the Netherlands' third; and "real-life adventure stories," the seventh choice of the sample, was the third choice of both England and Japan.

[Insert Table 2 here - see pages 9a and 9b]

Whether the differences in choices between the countries are culturally based, are a result of a curriculum-directed experience, or can be traced to the affective domain of the child, is of course, conjectural. There are differences among the interests of children in the countries represented in the sample, but obviously there are similarities--fairy tales and fantasies are of great interest to many children in the first

TABLE 2

FIRST THREE RANKINGS OF TOPICS BY COUNTRIES: FIRST YEAR

(Roman numberals represent rankings of entire sample; parenthetical numbers represent rankings of country.)

I. Fairy tales and fantasies

Austria (1)
Canada (2)
England (1)
Israel (1)
Italy (1)
Japan (2)
the Netherlands (1)
Panama (1)
Sweden (1)
United States (1)

II. Stores about children

Austria (2)
Canada (3)
Israel (2)
Italy (3)
the Netherlands (2)
Panama (3)
United States (2)

III. Stories about real animals

Canada (1)
Israel (3)
Panama (2)

IV. Information about animals

Italy (2)
Sweden (2)
United States (3)

V. Stories about people

Austria (3)
England (2)

VI. Monster stories

Italy (3)
Japan (1)
the Netherlands (3)

VII. Real-life adventure stories

England (3)
Japan (3)

VIII. Funny stories

Italy (3)*
Sweden (3)

XVII. Chemical and biological information

Italy (3)*

XVIII. "How to..." information, other than mechanical

Italy (3)*

*Same degree of preference

year of school across the 10 countries.

An analysis of the choices of children in the second year of school reveals that the 1,048 children in the survey made 1,130 choices, which are classified as 25 topics; the additional interest was the dictionary which accounted for two choices. The number of choices exceeded the number of children by 82; apparently more children in the second year of school than in the first had multiple reading interests. Fictional topics numbered 721, or 64 percent of the second year choices; non-fiction topics numbered 409, or 36 percent of the total. Thus, although fiction was still the major reading interest of children in the second year of school, there was a marked increase in requests for factual reading material. The first 10 topics reflected 79 percent of the expressed interest rather than the 89 percent evidenced by those in the first year of school, which appeared to indicate that interests were widening with a portion of the children.

Second year topic choices are shown in Table 3.

[Insert Table 3 here - see page 10a]

As a comparison of Tables 1 and 3 indicates, topics chosen by first and second year children were similar. There were, however, differences in the degree of interest shown in the topics, and "fairy tales and fantasies" was again, in the second year, the topic which received the greater frequency of interest. However, "stories about children," which was the second most popular topic in the first year, ranked third in the second year. "Information about animals," which ranked fourth in the first year, was the second most popular topic in the second year. "Stories about animals," ranked third in the first

TABLE 3

TOPICS CHOSEN BY CHILDREN IN THE SECOND YEAR OF SCHOOL

TOPIC	TOTAL	PERCENT	RANK
Fairy tales and fantasies	266	23.54	1
Information about animals	145	12.83	2
Stories about children	116	10.27	3
Stories about real animals	85	7.52	4
Real-life adventure stories	65	5.75	5
Monster stories - superhuman personalities	57	5.04	6
Stories about people	44	3.89	7
How to make and/or operate mechanical vehicles, etc.	42	3.72	8
Funny stories	39	3.45	9
Information on space	36	3.19	10
Information on vocations	30	2.65	11
Information on sports	28	2.48	12
Historic events and famous people	26	2.30	13
TV cartoons	24	2.12	14
Prehistoric life	22	1.95	15
Chemical and biological information	21	1.86	16
Mystery and ghost stories	20	1.77	17
"How to..." information, other than mechanical	16	1.42	18
How things grow	14	1.24	19
Religious themes	10	.88	20
Famous contemporary people	9	.80	21
Current events	6	.53	22
Science fiction	5	.44	23
Dictionaries	2	.18	24
Ecology	2	.18	24

year, was ranked fourth in the second year.

There was greater interest in "TV cartoons" and "how things grow" among children in the first year. There was considerably more interest in "information on space" in the second year, where it was ranked tenth as compared to a ranking of twentieth in the first year. There was also a greater interest in "information on sports."

As in the first year, analysis of the first three choices of each country reveals both similarities and differences, as shown in Table 4. "Fairy tales and fantasies," which ranked first with the second year sample also ranked first with eight countries, and second with Sweden and the United States. "Information about animals," which ranked second with the second year sample, was the first choice of Sweden and the United States, second choice of Japan, and third choice of Panama. "Stories about children," the topic ranked third, ranked third with Austria, Canada, England, Japan, Sweden, and the United States, but second with Panama and Israel. The topic ranked fourth, "stories about real animals," was the second choice of Canada and Panama; but it was the third choice of Israel and Italy. The topic ranked fifth, "real life adventure stories," was the second choice of Austria, England, and the Netherlands; the topic ranked ninth by the total second year sample, "funny stories," was ranked second by the second year children of Italy; "information on space," which was ranked tenth by the entire sample was ranked second by Austria; and the topic ranked sixteenth by the total second year sample, "chemical or biological information," was ranked third by the second year children of the Netherlands.

TABLE 4

FIRST THREE RANKINGS OF TOPICS BY COUNTRIES: SECOND YEAR

(Roman numberals represent rankings of entire sample; parenthetical numbers represent rankings of country.)

I. Fairy tales and fantasies

Austria (1)
Canada (1)
England (1)
Israel (1)
Italy (1)
Japan (1)
the Netherlands (1)
Panama (1)
Sweden (2)
United States (2)

II. Information about animals

Japan (2)
Panama (3)
Sweden (1)
United States (1)

III. Stories about children

Austria (3)
Canada (3)
England (3)
Israel (2)
Japan (3)
Panama (2)*
Sweden (3)
United States (3)

IV. Stories about real animals

Canada (2)
Israel (3)
Italy (3)
Panama (2)*

*Same degree of preference

V. Real life adventure stories

Austria (2)*
England (2)
the Netherlands (2)

IX. Funny stories

Italy (2)

X. Information on space

Austria (2)*

XVI. Chemical or biological information

the Netherlands (3)

*Same degree of preference

THE CATEGORIES

The topics children chose were then allocated to seven prearranged categories (as discussed previously): information-scientific; information-historic; information-1970s; realistic fiction; imaginative fiction; humor; and poetry. "Poetry," as has been noted, was probably too abstract a designation for this age group and was not chosen by any child.

The statistic "chi-square," used to compare a set of observed frequencies with a set of hypothetical set of expected frequencies, was employed to determine statistical significance. In this study, the observed frequencies expressed (within each group) the frequency with which a category was selected, while the expected frequencies were the frequencies that would have been expected if no differences existed in the preferences of the groups being compared. The greater the variation, as shown by a numerically larger chi-square, the greater is the

year of school across the 10 countries.

An analysis of the choices of children in the second year of school reveals that the 1,048 children in the survey made 1,130 choices, which are classified as 25 topics; the additional interest was the dictionary which accounted for two choices. The number of choices exceeded the number of children by 82; apparently more children in the second year of school than in the first had multiple reading interests. Fictional topics numbered 721, or 64 percent of the second year choices; non-fiction topics numbered 409, or 36 percent of the total. Thus, although fiction was still the major reading interest of children in the second year of school, there was a marked increase in requests for factual reading material. The first 10 topics reflected 79 percent of the expressed interest rather than the 89 percent evidenced by those in the first year of school, which appeared to indicate that interests were widening with a portion of the children.

Second year topic choices are shown in Table 3.

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As a comparison of Tables 1 and 3 indicates, topics chosen by first and second year children were similar. There were, however, differences in the degree of interest shown in the topics, and "fairy tales and fantasies" was again, in the second year, the topic which received the greater frequency of interest. However, "stories about children," which was the second most popular topic in the first year, ranked third in the second year. "Information about animals," which ranked fourth in the first year, was the second most popular topic in the second year. "Stories about animals," ranked third in the first

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Information on space	36	3.19	10
Information on vocations	30	2.65	11
Information on sports	28	2.48	12
Historic events and famous people	26	2.30	13
TV cartoons	24	2.12	14
Prehistoric life	22	1.95	15
Chemical and biological information	21	1.86	16
Mystery and ghost stories	20	1.77	17
"How to..." information, other than mechanical	16	1.42	18
How things grow	14	1.24	19
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There was greater interest in "TV cartoons" and "how things grow" among children in the first year. There was considerably more interest in "information on space" in the second year, where it was ranked tenth as compared to a ranking of twentieth in the first year. There was also a greater interest in "information on sports."

As in the first year, analysis of the first three choices of each country reveals both similarities and differences, as shown in Table 4. "Fairy tales and fantasies," which ranked first with the second year sample also ranked first with eight countries, and second with Sweden and the United States. "Information about animals," which ranked second with the second year sample, was the first choice of Sweden and the United States, second choice of Japan, and third choice of Panama. "Stories about children," the topic ranked third, ranked third with Austria, Canada, England, Japan, Sweden, and the United States, but second with Panama and Israel. The topic ranked fourth, "stories about real animals," was the second choice of Canada and Panama; but it was the third choice of Israel and Italy. The topic ranked fifth, "real life adventure stories," was the second choice of Austria, England, and the Netherlands; the topic ranked ninth by the total second year sample, "funny stories," was ranked second by the second year children of Italy; "information on space," which was ranked tenth by the entire sample was ranked second by Austria; and the topic ranked sixteenth by the total second year sample, "chemical or biological information," was ranked third by the second year children of the Netherlands.

TABLE 4

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Canada (1)
England (1)
Israel (1)
Italy (1)
Japan (1)
the Netherlands (1)
Panama (1)
Sweden (2)
United States (2)

II. Information about animals

Japan (2)
Panama (3)
Sweden (1)
United States (1)

III. Stories about children

Austria (3)
Canada (3)
England (3)
Israel (2)
Japan (3)
Panama (2)*
Sweden (3)
United States (3)

IV. Stories about real animals

Canada (2)
Israel (3)
Italy (3)
Panama (2)*

*Same degree of preference

V. Real life adventure stories

Austria (2)*
England (2)
the Netherlands (2)

IX. Funny stories

Italy (2)

X. Information on space

Austria (2)*

XVI. Chemical or biological information

the Netherlands (3)

*Same degree of preference

THE CATEGORIES

The topics children chose were then allocated to seven prearranged categories (as discussed previously): information-scientific; information-historic; information-1970s; realistic fiction; imaginative fiction; humor; and poetry. "Poetry," as has been noted, was probably too abstract a designation for this age group and was not chosen by any child.

The statistic "chi-square," used to compare a set of observed frequencies with a set of hypothetical set of expected frequencies, was employed to determine statistical significance. In this study, the observed frequencies expressed (within each group) the frequency with which a category was selected, while the expected frequencies were the frequencies that would have been expected if no differences existed in the preferences of the groups being compared. The greater the variation, as shown by a numerically larger chi-square, the greater is the

certainty that the difference is not due to chance variation. Chi-square tested the differences in the proportion of the responses that fell within each category for the different groups, rather than differences between groups in the ranking of the categories. The category choices of the 2,110 children who took part in the survey could be ranked (1) imaginative fiction, with 742.5 choices; (2) realistic fiction, with 633.5 choices; (3) information-scientific, with 406.4 choices; (4) information 1970s, with 224.5 choices; (5) information-historic, with 57 choices; and (6) humor, with 46 choices. However, the proportion of choices falling in each category varied from group to group.

As previously discussed,the study in the United States was completed in advance of the study in the nine countries, and with a far larger sample. Thus, some of the data had to be statistically examined without the United States included in the table; the numerical weight of the U.S. sample would have skewed the compilations.

Nine questions formed the framework for the statistical analysis:

(1) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of children in the first year of school among the 10 countries surveyed in the study?

Chi-square analysis showed significant differences at the .01 level. The proportion of responses to the category "information-scientific" was greater in Italy, Sweden, and the United States; responses to "realistic fiction" were greater in England and Israel and markedly fewer in Italy; responses to "imaginstive fiction" were greater in the Netherlands and Italy.

(2) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of children in the second year of school among the 10 countries surveyed in the study?

Chi-square analysis showed significant differences at the .01 level. The proportion of responses to the category "information-scientific" were markedly fewer in England and Israel than in the rest of the sample; responses to "information-1970s" were greater in the United States; responses to "realistic fiction" were greater in England and Israel, and markedly fewer in Italy; and responses to "imaginative fiction" were fewer in Sweden and the United States.

(3) Are there significant differences between the expressed reading interests of first and second year children in the 10 countries surveyed in the study?

Chi-square analysis revealed significant differences at the .01 level. The proportion of responses were greater in the second year than in the first year to the categories "information-scientific," "information-historic," and "information-1970s." The proportion of responses were greater in the first year to the category "realistic fiction" and to "imaginative fiction."

(4) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of first year boys and first year girls? (The United States was treated separately because of the size of the sample.)

Chi-square showed no significant differences in the proportion of responses of first year boys and girls. However, for the United States sample alone there were significant differences at the .01 level in the expressed reading interests of first year boys and girls, with boys showing a far greater proportion of interest for the category "information 1970s."

(5) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of second year boys and second year girls? (The United States, because of the size of the sample, was treated separately.)

Chi-square showed no significant differences in the proportion of responses of second year boys and girls. The United States sample alone, however, did show significant differences at the .01 level between second year boys and girls, with girls showing a far greater preference for "realistic fiction" and "imaginative fiction" and boys exhibiting greater interest in "information 1970s."

The pronounced differences in expressed reading interests between young boys and girls in the United States presents a puzzling contrast to the similarity of reading interests shown between boys and girls in the other nine countries surveyed. Additional research appears needed.

(6) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of first year children of high, average, and low intelligence? (The United States, because of the size of the sample, was treated separately.)

Chi-square showed no significant differences in the proportion of the responses of first year children of high, average, or low intelligence.

The United States sample alone, however, showed significant differences at the .05 level, with children of high intelligence expressing a greater interest in "information-scientific" and "information-1970s," and children of low intelligence showing a greater interest in the category "realistic fiction."

(7) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of second year children of high, average, and low intelligence? (Again, the United States was omitted from the overall compilation.)

Chi-square analysis showed significant differences at the .05 level, with children of high intelligence showing a higher proportion of

interest in the categories of "information-scientific" and "imaginative fiction" than did children in the other categories. Conversely, the United States sample showed no significant differences in the expressed reading interests of second year children according to intelligence.

(8) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of first year children of high, average, and low reading level? (The overall compilation did not include the United States.)

Chi-square analysis showed significant differences at the .01 level between first year children of high, average, and low reading level. Children of high and average level showed a greater proportion of interest in the category "information-scientific" than did children of low reading level; children of low reading level showed a greater interest in "realistic fiction," and children of high and average reading level showed more interest in the category "imaginative fiction." The United States sample showed a similar pattern: significant differences at the .01 level, with children at the low reading level showing a greater proportion of interest in the category "realistic fiction."

(9) Are there significant differences in the expressed reading interests of second year children of high, average, and low reading level?

Chi-square analysis showed no significant differences in the proportion of responses of children of high, average, and low reading level in any of the countries including the United States sample.

See Table 4 for listing of significant differences.

In addition the variations of age in each year were scanned in relation to category choice (5.1 to 7.2 in the first year; 6.2 to 8.4 in the second year), but no consistent age-choice pattern could be discerned.

To sum up this portion of the study:

There are some significant differences in reading interests in both first and second year children among the 10 countries of the survey.

There are some significant differences in reading interests between first and second year children in the 10 countries.

In compilations which did not include the United States, there were no significant differences in reading interests between boys and girls of either first or second year; significant differences in reading interests were shown in second year children, according to intelligence, but not first year children; significant differences in reading interests were shown in first year according to reading level, but not in second year.

The United States sample showed significant differences in reading interests between boys and girls in both first and second year; significant differences were evident in reading interests in first year children, according to intelligence, but not among second year children; and, as in the nine countries, significant differences in the reading interests of children in the first year of school were demonstrated, according to reading level, but this was not true of children in the second year of school.

[Insert Table 4 here - see page 18a]

EXPRESSED DERIVATION OF INTEREST

In the final section of this report on findings are the data related to the ascertaining of the source of the expressed reading interest. This was determined through a "probing" question which concluded each child's personal interview. Some children gave several sources, so that the replies exceeded the number of children in the study.

TABLE 4

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN READING INTERESTS

GROUPING	GRADE LEVEL	SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL
Between 10 countries	1, 2	.01
Between 1st and 2nd years; 10 countries	1, 2	.01
Boys and girls (without U.S.)	1, 2	none
Boys and girls - U.S.	1, 2	.01
Intelligence (without U.S.)	1	none
Intelligence - U.S.	1	.05
Intelligence (without U.S.)	2	.05
Intelligence - U.S.	2	none
Reading level (without U.S.)	1	.01
Reading level - U.S.	1	.01
Reading level (without U.S.)	2	none
Reading level - U.S.	2	none

The replies of first and second year children were similar. Twenty percent of the first year children and almost 18 percent of the second year children could not designate the interest source. Trade books accounted for more than 30 percent of the expressed derivation in both years (slightly higher in second than in first); television for more than 16 percent of the derivation of the interest source (slightly higher in first than in second); and personal experiences, such as trips, having a pet, family events and family background, accounted for approximately 23 percent in each year. The designation "other," which accounted for slightly less than five percent of the expressed derivation in each year, included such items as model kits, phonograph records, Sunday School, movies (other than TV), and comic books.

Analyzing the sources for each category in percentages reveals great similarities between years one and two. (Tables 5 and 6.) In the category "information-scientific," both trade books and TV show slight increases as interest sources in the second year. For "information-1970s," there is an increase in trade books as a source, a decrease in television. "Realistic fiction," in the second year, shows less involvement with personal experience than was evident in the first year; "imaginative fiction" shows somewhat greater use of books as a source in the second year.

Difficult to tabulate but ever-present in the comments of the children were the influences of both home and school. "My Mommy told me I'd like this book; my teacher said it was a good program, my Dad read that book to me, the whole family went on a trip to the seashore."

[Insert Table 5 and Table 6 here - see pages 20 and 21]

TABLE 5

EXPRESSED DERIVATION OF INTEREST

WORLD SAMPLE, FIRST YEAR: PERCENTAGES

	Books		TV	Personal Experience	Other	Unknown	Total
	Trade	Basals					
Information Scientific	25.56	1.98	10.43	31.27	4.46	26.30	100
Information Historic	21.74	-	21.74	4.36	26.08	26.08	100
Information 1970s	12.18	-	32.69	29.49	5.13	20.51	100
Realistic Fiction	27.90	2.98	10.21	36.62	3.48	18.81	100
Imaginative Fiction	42.21	1.16	25.18	7.22	4.89	19.34	100
Humor	44.83	31.04	20.69	-	-	3.44	100
Poetry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

TABLE 6

EXPRESSED DERIVATION OF INTEREST

WORLD SAMPLE; SECOND YEAR: PERCENTAGES

	Books		TV	Personal Experience	Other	Unknown	Totals
	Trade	Basals					
Information Scientific	31.99	.34	12.95	31.29	3.15	20.28	100
Information Historic	50.00	-	16.67	14.59	9.37	9.37	100
Information 1970s	20.83	-	24.61	32.81	5.67	16.08	100
Realistic Fiction	29.06	2.36	8.28	30.24	4.39	25.67	
Imaginative Fiction	46.49	3.74	20.38	12.18	4.21	13.00	100
Humor	50.00	-	23.33	10.00	6.67	10.00	100
Poetry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

There is little question that this study is limited by several factors; broad generalizations cannot and must not be made. It can only stand for what it is: an expression by children in the first and second formal years of school (excluding kindergarten) of their momentary interest in a topic to read or have read to them.

These children did not seem to be handicapped by being asked to draw a response except in London where a number of the first year children in the sample were not used to drawing, and were younger than most of the subjects in the sample. On the other hand, children of the same ages in Manchester, England, did not appear to have the same problem.

Also it could be that a different group of interests might be elicited at other times or in other settings. This remains for future investigators to determine. (Our hunch is that most of the same topics would appear and that the rankings would be unchanged.) Our only evidence at this point is the pilot work being conducted by Dorothy Kirsch who finds interests quite constant after repeated interviews. We have not tried other situations outside of the school or with other interviewers, such as peers or parents.

However, based on the findings of this study and for this sample and keeping in mind the delimitations of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Although there are some significant differences, there appear to be more similarities among the expressed reading interests of first and second year children in 10 countries than differences.

2. Fairy tales and fantasies are the most preferred expressed reading interests of first and second year children in the 10 countries.

3. Fairy tales and fantasies, stories about children, plus stories and information about real animals were the top choices of over two-thirds of the children in the first year of school for the entire sample. The same choices in a slightly different ranking order were the top choices of 54 percent of all the children in the second year of school. More of the second year children expressed a greater diversity of interests.

4. Reading interests of second year children demonstrated more preferences for nonfictional topics than the interests of first year children.

5. Reading interests among children in the first year of school for the 10 countries differed significantly in relation to reading levels as judged roughly by classroom teachers. Other differences were inconsistent in terms of statistical significance.

6. Derivations of interests were similar for both years with trade books as the most popular source, personal experiences next, and television third.

Implications

Again, please realize that the implications grow out of a study limited in design and scope. Nevertheless, some speculation about what meaning the findings might have seems warranted in the light of even this limited evidence.

1. Anyone involved with planning for young children's reading should be aware of the variety of topics children appear to be interested in reading about.

2. If the significant difference between interests and reading levels in both years is reliable (and this may be demonstrated by additional experimentation), planning for instructional experiences should consider such differences. It appears that children in the second year of school, reading at a lower reading level than placement in school, will not have their interests met through the use of materials meant for the first year of school.

Blom and others (1) in analyzing the content of readers intended for the first year of school found their content too bland and "happy family centered" for first year children. The content would appear to be even more inappropriate for second year children who are reading at levels more closely related to first year performance. Second year children of low reading ability might profit from instruction using easy-to-read books with a focus upon factually related topics and imaginative fiction.

3. Young children throughout the world (at least as viewed through the samples in these 10 countries) appear to have many similar interests. This conclusion would seem to point toward the implication that more universal, structured, educational activities could be planned as early as school years one and two involving interrelationships among children in these 10 countries. Art work, photography and pantomime are possible ways of using common interests to build mutual understandings at early ages.

Suggested Research

1. Obviously replications of this study in other countries and at other times of the year are needed to ascertain the validity of these expressed interests as more than momentary choices.

2. Also, the same children should be asked to draw and explain their interests a number of times within a month or so to determine the reliability of the expressed interests.

3. Once the expressed interests appear to be valid and reliable over a number of studies, the interests should be compared to the curricula in the first two years of school. Although educators wish to expand children's interests, the early experiences in school ought to relate to the interests of the learners if they are to conceive of learning as interesting and relevant. These children in this study did not demonstrate any great desire to read about family life but appeared to want to expand their worlds to a multitude of areas beyond their everyday living.

References

1. Blom, Gaston L. and others. "What the Story World is Like," What Children Read in School, ed. Sara Goodman Zimet (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1972), pp. 1-18.